

SEPTEMBER 1959

# The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

---

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

*James Daane*

LESSONS FROM CALVIN

*John H. Kromminga*

NICODEMUS AND EDUCATION

*Steve J. Vander Weele*

THE DISTORTION OF DENOMINATIONAL IDEALS

*Simon J. De Vries*

THE GOSPEL AND HISTORY

*Leonard Sweetman, Jr.*

BOOK REVIEW

LETTERS



---



---

**E E R D M A N S**


---



---

**CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF  
THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD**

By T. H. L. Parker

"Books like this one help us to understand and appreciate John Calvin as a theologian and a Christian . . . It ranks among the best in current theological literature because of its clarity, fairness, and practical value" — Henry Petersen, *The Banner*, 8/14/59.

**\$3.00**

**CALVIN'S DOCTRINE  
OF MAN**

By Thomas F. Torrance

"Torrance's book embodies a very good orientation . . . He shows us from the works themselves the unity of Calvin's ideas. Torrance is one of the most interesting theologians of the Anglo-Saxon world who with every new book surprises us with the results of his patient research" — Dr. G. C. Berkouwer.

**\$3.50**

**CHRIST IN OUR PLACE:  
CALVIN'S DOCTRINE  
OF THE ATONEMENT**

By Paul Van Buren

"In this reviewer's judgment this is one of the finest theological works that has appeared in many years. It comes to grips with the heart of Christian theology in a highly intelligent manner" — John R. Richardson, *Southern Presbyterian Journal*.

**\$3.00**

**CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE  
WORD AND SACRAMENT**

By Ronald S. Wallace

"Those of us who are half-Zwinglian in our doctrine of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, perhaps never having read Calvin's Commentaries, if we have read the Institutes, ought to read Wallace's discussion. It is superb" — Dr. M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Reformed Journal*, 5/58.

**\$3.50**

**CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF  
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

By Ronald S. Wallace

This fresh and original study gives Calvin's teaching on prayer and on many aspects of Christian discipline and ethics. It shows that while Calvin gives full weight to the conflict and suffering in which a Christian is involved, nevertheless the Christian life is predominantly one of assurance and achievement and hope. Ready November 1.

**\$5.00**



**Wm. B. EERDMANS  
PUBLISHING CO.**  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

# The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT & OPINION

Volume IX

No. 8

SEPTEMBER 1959

## Editorial Board

HENRY STOB, HARRY R. BOER, JAMES DAANE  
LESTER DEKOSTER, GEORGE STOB

## Publisher

William B. Eerdmans, Sr.

## THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Dr. James Daane, *Minister of the First Christian Reformed Church, Los Angeles, California.*

## LESSONS FROM CALVIN

Dr. John H. Kromminga, *President of Calvin Seminary*

## NICODEMUS AND EDUCATION

Dr. Steve J. Vander Weele, *Associate Professor of English, Calvin College.*

## THE DISTORTION OF DENOMINATIONAL IDEALS

Dr. Simon J. De Vries, *Minister of the Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan.*

## THE GOSPEL AND HISTORY

Rev. Leonard Sweetman, Jr., *Minister of the Christian Reformed Church.*

## BOOK REVIEW

## LETTERS

PUBLISHED MONTHLY, excepting August, by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, at 231 Jefferson Avenue, S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 25c per copy; \$2.50 one year; \$4.00 two years.

ADDRESS all subscriptions to Subscription Department, *The Reformed Journal*, 231 Jefferson Avenue, S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan. Address all editorial and advertising communications to Managing Editor and Advertising Manager respectively.

Managing Editor: Calvin P. Bulthuis; Advertising Manager: David Wynbeek.



# The Fatherhood of God

by James Daane

In itself, the word "God" has no specific meaning. It can, for example, within the Bible be applied to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also to the idols of paganism. In non-Christian thought the word "God" comes to mean whatever meaning men put into it. In Christian thought the word obtains its significance from the meaning which the Bible gives it.

One of the most important terms used in the Bible to indicate the nature of God is "father." This term is so profoundly indicative of the nature of God that the words "God" and "father" are interchangeable. The statements "God is Father," and "Father is God," mean exactly the same thing. Thus in the Lord's Prayer where the word "God" does not appear at all, we are taught to think of God, from the beginning to the end of the prayer, in terms of "father."

How important the term "father" is in the Christian description of God appears also in the fact that the very first thing the Church says in its Apostolic Creed about the God in whom it believes, is that He is "father." The early Church knew that God must first be described as "father," even before He is described as "almighty." It recognized that if God is first described as sovereign and *then* as "father," the fatherhood of God would be defined in terms of sovereignty, rather than sovereignty in terms of "fatherhood," and both would thus be misconstrued. The Apostles' Creed therefore describes God first as Father and then declares that as "father" He is almighty and that His almighty fatherhood expresses itself in the making of the heavens and the earth, and in the production of His "only begotten Son." It is as Father that God is almighty. If there is any "first truth" about God, and "fundamental principle of Christianity," it is the fatherhood of God.<sup>1</sup>

The profound significance of the fatherhood of God is also seen in the fact that God is not first of all *a* father. To say merely this is akin to saying God is *a* God. God is no more *a* God, i.e., one among many, than He is *a* father, i.e., one among many. God is Father — in the sense that Father is God. It is in this profound sense of the fatherhood of God that Jesus said, "Call no man father on the

earth: for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9).

From the Bible we discover that "father" means *source*. God is Father because God — and God alone — is the origin, fountain, the genesis, from which all things proceed. All things, sin only excepted, have their origin in God. In Him all things have their beginning. All things are "of him." It is for this reason that the book of Genesis tells us first that God is Father, the one who in the beginning "created the heavens and the earth." And the Church in its Apostolic Confession acknowledges this "first" by declaring first of all concerning the God in whom she believes that He is Father, the "maker of heaven and earth."

## *The Father of the World*

The fatherhood of God comes to expression in many ways. Let us begin where the Bible and the Apostolic Creed begin. The fatherhood of God is expressed in the creation of the heavens and the earth. The heavens and the earth did not come from nowhere. The heavens and earth have their origin in God. They proceeded from Him. God is the source from whence they came. We often say the world was made out of nothing, not so much to express truth as to avoid error, the error of thinking that the world had its origin and beginning in something other than God, in some other father than God the Father. Similarly, we often avoid the expression that the world had its beginning or origin in God, in order to avoid the error of conveying the impression that the world is an overflow, or a watered-down extension of God Himself. The world is not God, but the world did have its origin and genesis *in* God, for the creation of the world is an expression of the fatherhood of God. And, as such, the world is not only a revelation of God, it is also one of the ways in which God *gives* Himself, goes out of Himself to give Himself to another. Thus the heavens and the earth are an expression of the fatherhood of God: they have their origin *in* God and the divine creative action by which they came forth from God is an act in which God gives Himself to another so that this other, this reality which is not God, may receive and share in the beauty and wonder of the divine life.

## *The Father of Israel*

In the Old Testament we learn that God is the Father of Israel. God is the one who fashioned

<sup>1</sup> The sovereignty of God may be the central principle of Calvinism, i.e., that which chiefly distinguishes Calvinism from Lutheranism or Arminianism, but that which chiefly distinguishes one type of Christianity from another is not by that fact the central principle of Christianity.



Israel in the womb. Israel owes her origin to the election (calling) and creative action of God. "But now thus saith Jehovah that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel" (Isa. 43:1). "Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith Jehovah that made thee, and formed thee from the womb" (Isa. 44:1, 2). "Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee" (Isa. 44:21). "Harken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, that have been borne by me from their birth, that have been carried from the womb; and even to old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; yea, I will carry, and will deliver" (Isa. 46:3, 4). Israel has her origin and source in the creating and electing action of God. God is indeed the Father of Israel. The Exodus, therefore, can be described as that event in which God called His *son* out of Egypt, and the covenant that act of divine self-giving by which God becomes *their* God.

#### *The Father of Christians (Our Father)*

Just as Israel owes her existence to the creative and electing divine action, so Christians owe their existence to God's creation and election. They are "elected in Christ" (Eph. 1:4), they are "created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10). They are "begotten of God." In a deep and profound — and not merely in an analogical or poetic — sense, they are the children of the Father in heaven, begotten by God Himself. It was by the fatherly action of God Himself that they were created and called in Jesus Christ. They are Christians because of that divine power and action which "callesh the things that are not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). Just as Jesus of Bethlehem was conceived by God in the mystery of that event which took place when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and the power of the Almighty overshadowed her, so, too, has the Christian been conceived and begotten of God in the mystery of regeneration. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead as the living Christ by the creative power of God, just as Isaac was brought forth from one as good as dead by the creative power of Him who gives life to the dead and calls the things that are not as though they were, just so is every Christian raised from the dead, regenerated, begotten again, by the creative and electing power of God, so that God is indeed his Father, and he quite literally a child who is *of* God.

What is said here about individual Christians can also be said about the Church. The Church, too, is God's creation, and the object of His election. God is the Father of the Church; therefore we sing "Elect from every nation," and "She is His

new creation, by water and the word." The Church no less than the heavens and the earth, has its origin and source in God. The Church therefore is the Church of God (I Tim. 3:15).

#### *The Father of Jesus Christ*

First and foremost God is the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God's fatherhood of Jesus Christ must be approached in two ways. One must speak of the Father of the eternal Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, and of the Father of the Son Incarnate, Jesus of Bethlehem. I shall speak first of the latter.

God is the Father of Jesus of Nazareth, the Father of the baby that once lay in the manger of Bethlehem. That God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a truth that hardly needs belaboring for those who accept the Scriptures. Jesus called God His Father often enough, and He frequently asserted that He came from God, that He was sent by God, and would return to His origin, namely, to God. He is plainly designated in the New Testament as the Son of God, and God is plainly enough designated as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His very conception lies in the action of the Holy Spirit and results from the power of the Almighty which overshadowed the Virgin Mary. Indeed, the New Testament declares that He is the "firstborn of every creature" — which means not merely that He is God's firstborn, but also that He is a creature of the creation of God, indeed the firstborn of all God's creatures, who as such is the First and the Last, the Beginning and (therefore!) the End; the Alpha and the Omega of all the works of God the Father as Father. And, to mention nothing further, Psalm 2 declares that the Lord (God) said unto my Lord (Jesus of Bethlehem), "This day have I begotten thee." We hear in prophetic voice that the baby of the manger is begotten of God, and God, therefore, as the Father of Jesus, can say, "I called my son out of Egypt." God, according to the Biblical testimony, is indeed the Father, the source, the origin, the genesis, the author, the producer, the maker, the creator, the fountain, from whence Jesus of Nazareth proceeded. Because God is the Father of Jesus, Jesus came from God.

#### *The Eternal Father of the Eternal Son*

Since Jesus incarnate is the Son of the Father, God is also the Father of Jesus non-incarnate, which is to say, God is the Father of the eternal Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. Up to this point we have been discussing, briefly, the fatherhood of God as it is revealed in ways and manners that were not, strictly speaking, necessary. God was under no necessity to be the Father of the world, the Father of Israel, the Father of Christians, the



Father of the Church, the Father of the baby of Bethlehem. God was not obliged to father any of these things; that He did in fact father all of them stems from His grace, not from any necessity or obligation. God did not have to create the world, to call Israel as His own, to elect us, to elect the Church, to elect, send, and incarnate the Son. All this is merely (!) the expression of His free grace. All this fathering, all this self-giving, stems from His free choice, not from necessity.

When, however, we consider that fatherly action of God whereby He is the eternal Father of the eternal Son, we are considering something which in the light of the nature of God's being cannot be regarded as something that is merely the result of a divine decision. God eternally fathered (or fathers) the Son because it is the very nature of God to do so. It is the very nature of God as Father, to go out of Himself, to give Himself, and thus to posit Himself in the form of another. God has an eternal Son because it is the nature of His eternal being and reality to be a Father.

It may be said of a man that he is a father because he has a son. The reverse is true relative to God. God is a father, not because He has a son. Rather, He has a Son because He is a Father — or, rather, God is Father and therefore has (and always had) a Son.

When the Church insisted (for example, against Origen) that the Son is *eternally* generated by the Father, the Church was insisting not merely that the Son is as truly God as is God the Father; the Church was also insisting that the father-quality is of the very essence and being of God. Similarly, when the Western Church insisted that Father and Son eternally breathe forth the Holy Spirit, the Western Church was insisting not merely upon the true and complete deity of the Spirit, it was also insisting that the very nature of God as Father was no less fatherly in its existence in the form of the Son. Father and Son together (or both) reveal the fatherly, out-going nature of God in the eternal action of breathing forth the Holy Spirit.

The fatherly, out-going, self-giving nature of God is so very truly of the very essence of God that this fatherly quality constitutes the very deity of the Son, and of the Spirit as well.

### *Is God Extrovert or Introvert?*

In psychology we speak of the extrovert and the introvert personality. The introvert is a personality which is turned inward upon itself. Such a personality loves itself, talks to itself; stated simply, it is self-contained. The extrovert is a personality which is turned outward. He is open toward others. He loves others, communicates himself to others, gives himself to others. The windows of his per-

sonality open outward and his life and thought move outward from himself to others.

If we may think of God in these psychological terms for illustrative purposes, then it must be asserted that God is extrovert, not introvert. That God is Father means precisely that the life of God flows outward, that it is of its nature to give itself to another. Since God is Father in His very nature and being, He eternally projects, or posits Himself in the form of the Son, and the Son reveals the same fatherly nature and being, for Father and Son together, eternally, send forth, or breathe forth, the Holy Spirit, who then is the very Nature and Being of Father and Son in the form of the Holy Spirit.

Theologians have sometimes regarded the Holy Spirit as the closing of the circle, the return of the movement of the divine life upon itself. The going-away movement of the divine life expressed in the Father's generation of the Son and in the Father and Son's breathing forth of the Holy Spirit, is reversed or turned back in the person of the Holy Spirit so that the circle, rather than the arrow, becomes representative of the movement of the life of God. The efforts of such theologians have always appeared more speculative than convincing, and it is to be suspected that the effort was more induced by the Hegelian than by the Biblical influence. It is in any event not to be denied that the Church in its doctrine of the Trinity, as expressed in its great creeds, insisted that the Father produces the Son, and Father and Son, the Holy Spirit. The great trinitarian creeds make the arrow rather than the circle the symbol of the divine life, for these creeds contain nothing of the notion that the Spirit is the arc by which Father and Son return to each other again in full circle. Rather, the movement of the life of God described in the trinitarian creeds is a movement symbolized by the arrow, not the circle; by "extrovert," not "introvert."<sup>2</sup>

By this I do not mean to suggest that there is no reverse movement toward God as Father. Surely the Son loves the Father; but this love must be understood, I think, on the basis of the principle of subordination of the economic trinity: the Son loves the Father because the Father loves Him first, first not in point of time, but first in the sense that God is the Father, who in love moved out of Himself to posit Himself in the form of the Son. Or, if you will, God loved the Son first in the sense that

2. It was Greek paganism which conceived of the life of the Eternal in terms of a circle and therefore, on the one hand, conceived of God as a static introvert, one who neither gave nor revealed himself to man and had but complete unconcern for man and his misery, and on the other hand, conceived of history as circular rather than as an arrow moving toward a goal.



the Father is prior to the Son (in the pattern of the economic trinity) and in love begat the Son. Or again — to avoid misunderstanding — the love of the Son is second (responsive) because the Son owes His reality as Son to that fatherly action of love in which the Father reproduced Himself in the form of the Son.

On a quite different level to be sure, but in an analogous manner, there is a movement of return in the fact that the world glorifies God and men love and praise God. But this return movement is also in the nature of a response, a response of love and praise to God the Father, who as Father, in love, moved out of Himself to create man and his world in order to give something of Himself to man and his world. All things, man and his world, and the Son are "unto him" because they are all "of him," for God as Father is the Father, or source, of all.

Thus the movement of the life of God — which is grounded in His nature and being — is first and primarily, as regards both the production of the Son and the Spirit within God, and as regards the production of man and his world outside of God, a movement of one who is a Father, an outward, self-giving movement, the movement of one who is indeed a father, a source, a fountain from which all else proceeds.

### *Is God Self-Contained?*

If the main thesis of this article is correct, namely, that God as Father is a God whose life moves outward in self-giving on one level as relates to the begetting of the Son and the breathing forth of the Spirit, and, on a quite different level, in the creative fashion in which God fathered the world, then it is obvious that God is not a self-contained God.

The God who is the Father of the Son, the God who through a divine generation reproduces Himself in the form of the Son, and in this action, which is an eternal action, loves and gives Himself to the Son — He is surely not a self-contained God. As the eternal Father of the eternal Son and as the eternal Father or source, who together with the Son, breathes forth the Holy Spirit, He is the self-giving, i.e., the very opposite of a self-contained God. The distinctive feature of the Chris-

tian God is that He does not contain Himself, but goes out of Himself in a loving act of self-giving.

And if by the description of God as self-contained nothing is intended except that God does not need the world in order to be God, then a more unfortunate and misleading term could hardly have been selected. For a God who created man and the world that both might share in the beauty and beatitude of His own life, who gives Himself to man in covenant relationship so that man may say this is *my* God and *my* Lord, who reveals Himself, speaks His Word, who sends His Son into the world and gives His Son for the world, who sends His own Spirit into the Church and into the hearts of men, is indeed not a self-contained, but a loving, Father who gives Himself. Anyone who understands the trinitarian formulation of the nature of God as expressed in the Church's great trinitarian confessions, and who understands the fact that God *gave* His Son for the redemption of the world, cannot, without giving the term a meaning which is alien to its language, contend that God is one who contains Himself.

It is only when the Church understands that God in nature and being is Father, that is, is a God who gives Himself in love to another, that she will understand her calling to be opened outward to the world, her calling to go forth into the world, her calling to be truly apostolic in mission and service to the world. She will only, however, understand herself if she knows her origin, her Father, from whom she *came*.

It is only when the Church learns and understands that God is Father and that He, *as such*, is almighty, that the Church will learn that she has power and is truly strong only when she goes out of herself, and out of her self-concern, in love and service to that which is other than herself. She must discover the true nature of her origin, if she is to discover her true strength and mission.

As God gives Himself in the eternal generation of the Son, in the creation of the world, in the establishment of the covenant, in the calling and election of Israel and the Church, in the sending and giving of His Son Jesus, *to another*, so the Church must go out from herself, in self-giving to another, i.e., to that which is not Church, if she is truly to be the Church of God, the body of Christ.

---

ANY TIME IS A GOOD TIME TO TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT THE REFORMED JOURNAL. TELL THEM TODAY, OR TOMORROW. AND MAY WE SUGGEST THAT YOU TELL THEM TO SUBSCRIBE?

\$2.50 one year — \$4.00 two years

*The Reformed Journal*, 231 Jefferson, S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan



# Lessons from Calvin\*

by John H. Kromminga

WE have reached the opening hour of an academic year, the eighty-fourth for this institution. This could be a notable year or a humdrum year, or almost anything in between. Whether it is to be the one or the other is ultimately in the hand of God. As far as our own experience goes, that question depends to a large extent on events which we cannot predict and on forces beyond our control. But there is a certain area in which human application and devotion can affect the fortunes of this year; and it is with that limited, but important area that we concern ourselves.

This is the year in which the followers and heirs of John Calvin are devoting special attention to his life and work. Some of us may live to see the five-hundredth anniversary of his birth, but for others of us this is the best opportunity we shall ever have to reflect on the heritage which he has left us. We are honoring the memory of a man whom we have never completely forgotten nor neglected — something which cannot be said of everyone who celebrates his anniversary this year. We feel that we may with some justification lay claim to what he has to say on this occasion. Therefore, as Calvin Seminary begins its eighty-fourth year of operation, we shall consider some professional suggestions which we may derive from the life of our great theological forebear.

We may well do this at this place. This is a theological seminary and a training school for the ministry; and John Calvin was particularly a theologian and practical churchman. True, his interests extended to wider areas of life, and so there is room for a Calvin College, and for Kuyper's *Stone Lectures* on Calvinism and Art, and Calvinism and Science, and for Calvinistic Action Committees, and the like. But John Calvin's profession was that of a theologian and preacher, and that is our profession too. If there was anything outstanding about his pursuit of his profession — and there certainly was — it is for us to take note of it and to profit from it.

John Calvin pursued that profession with what some might call a narrow zeal. Though duty called him to range far afield, it was not to his liking to wander from theological pursuits. One might say, as some have said, that Calvin had a one-track mind. But within this field he was very broad, a many-sided theologian. It will be worth our while

to glance at his accomplishments in the various branches of theology.

JOHN Calvin was a master exegete. He has justly been called the prince of commentators. There is no other commentator of equal antiquity so widely used today. He spent much of his time in the writing and publication of commentaries on the books of the Bible. This, in fact, is the key to his life and work; for, once he had entered upon his life's work as a Reformer, his expositions of the Scriptures governed all his other work. To this work he brought unexcelled mental and spiritual qualifications; in this work he practiced and elaborated principles which are sound guides to the present day. He was an authority on the Bible: on what there was to know about it and on what there was to learn from it.

Alongside of this Biblical concentration, Calvin was thoroughly acquainted with the tradition of the Church, and respected it. He knew the Church Fathers well also, and respected them. He respected these authorities so well, in fact, as not to allow them to step out of their place, and not to exalt the trivial and incidental over the central in the Church's tradition. This was his claim over against Sadoletto, that it was the Reformers who truly represented the tradition of the Church. The values and limitations of church history and history of dogma were thus thoroughly appreciated by him, and he well knew how to make them the servants, rather than the masters, of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The eminence of John Calvin as a systematic theologian was so great as to make extensive comment unnecessary for our purposes. Suffice it to make reference to his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Four hundred years ago this year he published the final edition of the most notable systematic work in the Protestant tradition, and perhaps in the tradition of the whole Church since its beginning.

In the circumstances under which he lived, John Calvin was called upon to defend the faith from errors within and without. He excelled at this work. He was an acknowledged master of polemics. And he devoted some of his best talents to the apologetic defense of the faith.

He did formative work in the government of the Church, resurrecting the principles of Presbyterian polity from the obscurity in which they

\*Convocation address, Calvin Theological Seminary, September 11, 1959.



had been buried since the early centuries of the Church's history. He was a firm believer in catechetical instruction, and led the way in the production of catechisms. He devised an order of worship which harmonized with the Biblical principles of his system. And, not least among his accomplishments in the practical field, he was an outstanding preacher. No Calvin Seminary student should rest satisfied until he has read extensively in those sermons of Calvin which are easily available; for here one finds a side of this great man's character which is nowhere else so plainly and beautifully brought to light.

The one area of our curriculum in which Calvin does not shine is that of missions. Many references have been made to this lack in recent years, and we need not elaborate upon them, or make excuses for his failures in this regard. We may remark, however, that the lack is not as dismal or as total as has sometimes been suggested. From time to time in his *Commentaries* one finds references to the Christian's duty to witness to his neighbors concerning the truth. The propagation as well as the defense and elaboration of the truth was Calvin's interest; more could not be asked of a man of his day.

Besides all this he was a practical pastor and churchman. His pastoral concern finds expression in his letters — elsewhere too, but particularly there. He served with joy as the pastor of the refugee church in Strassburg. His three-year term of duty there is said to have been the happiest period of his life. His wider interests as a churchman are seen in his ecumenical activities, which have lately been receiving much attention. These activities stamp him as an ecclesiastical statesman, laboring tirelessly for the advancement of the Church anywhere and its unity everywhere.

The few things to which we have made reference are far from an exhaustive list of the accomplishments of John Calvin. They are presented in order to suggest why we should pay close heed to the professional suggestions which may be drawn from his life. Within his chosen and beloved profession of theology, he was a man of wide interests. All of us, no matter what our predilections or specialties may be, may acknowledge him as a sound and inspiring theological guide. But as we note this breadth of interests and the suggestions which his life gives us, it will be well also to remember how closely concentrated all these things were on the Word of God, which had the fervent love of Calvin's heart and the close attention of his mind.

WHAT professional suggestions can we gain from the life and work of this man whose namesakes

we are? What academic new year's resolutions can we derive from him? Let me suggest five of them, for your consideration and profit.

John Calvin was a man of *intense concentration* upon his work. In this connection we call to mind the comment of a noted historian. Philip Schaff says, "The literary activity of Calvin, whether we look at the number or the importance of works, is not surpassed by any ecclesiastical writer, ancient or modern, and excites double astonishment when we take into consideration the shortness of his life, the frailty of his health, and the multiplicity of his other labors as a teacher, preacher, church ruler, and correspondent." This man, whose extant writings are prodigious, and some of whose works have not even yet been published, died before he had reached his fifty-fifth birthday. If we were little children, that might seem like a ripe old age. I doubt that it seems so to any of us here.

The idea of burning ourselves out in our work is not very common in our day. We are strongly advised against this by medical authorities. We are much more concerned with living longer — for precisely what purpose, we do not always know. But some of the greatest names in history belong to men who thought otherwise, and lived longer in memory because of it. To mention just two from the medieval heritage of the Church, Dominici and Thomas Aquinas burned themselves out at a relatively early age; they consumed themselves in their work. True, there were others who thrived on such a diet. St. Boniface worked as hard as any man, endured great perils, and finally achieved the martyr's crown when at least eighty years of age.

But today the idea of being immersed in work, of dictating from the sickbed, of being consumed with the passion to produce, seems more characteristic of businessmen than of theologians. But if one shares with Calvin his faith in God and in the Bible, such intense and devoted living is most satisfying. Recreation? fine; I like it and do not begrudge it to anyone else. But we must find our real joy in what we are here for. What an exhilarating year we could have if this characterized all of us!

John Calvin was a man *undeterred by criticism*. He received his full share of criticism, and was not unmindful of it. His polemic activities are ample evidence that he took note of the criticisms which were levelled against him. Beyond mere criticism of his views, voiced though it was in terms which we should consider shocking today, there was active hostility in which his life and physical well-being were sometimes in jeopardy. He was aware of that hostility too, and did not like it. It may fairly be suggested that Calvin was a physically timid and retiring man. He once said, "I



have lived here amid continual bickerings. I have been in derision saluted of an evening before my door with forty or fifty shots from an arquebus. How think you must that have astonished a poor scholar timid as I am, and as I have always been?" He was an ordinary mortal like the rest of us, and no such ordinary mortal likes to have his views reviled and his position threatened and his body assailed. Not even a Moses, an Elijah, or a Peter can take such things with perfect equanimity. Thus I do not say that he was unheeding or unaware of animosity and opposition, but he was undaunted by it. Higher goals carried him onward. By lifting him above himself they made him more of a man than he could otherwise be. A more important lesson we could hardly imagine. For every man worth his salt is going to face opposition. He may think it terribly unfair that such a thing could happen to him, especially if he is sure that his motives are above reproach. But opposition will come; and when it comes, he cannot accomplish good work if he allows it to drive him from what he is convinced has to be done.

John Calvin, thirdly, was *responsive to duty*. On two notable occasions in his life this became clearly evident. Each of these occasions was a call to service in the city of Geneva. The first came in 1536 when Farel first summoned him to share in the reformation of that city. The second came in 1540-41 when officials of Geneva, supported by some of Calvin's friends, urged him to return from exile to rescue the city from the doldrums into which it had fallen. In both instances, the prospect of laboring in Geneva was distasteful to him. Such labors involved great combat and tension, and Calvin was too astute an observer to think otherwise. This was something from which his soul shrank. Quiet labors in his study and the peaceful ministry to a congregation appealed to him far more. Controversy in such an arena as Geneva was wholly contrary to his natural bent. But when he was convinced that God called, he went; and this is the measure of the man.

Our application of this suggestion can probably best be made in the post-seminary years of the minister's life. There will be abundant opportunities there our lives long, in the summons to a distasteful field or to a distasteful task in the daily routine. But the summons of God's will over against selfish, though apparently legitimate, desires is not absent from the seminary years. We may be sure that assignments will be finished earlier and better, and the profits of study-years will multiply, if we consistently obey the voice of duty when it is clearly heard. There is no time like today to start.

John Calvin, further, was a man *personally concerned for his fellow man*. If there is any aspect of his character which has been ignored or maligned, this is it. Not so often today, but frequently in the rather recent past, he has been pictured as the rigid logician, the emotionless iceberg, subjecting men to a heartless theological and moral system without concern for their persons and feelings. This is far from a correct picture. Calvin was a man capable of forming friendships which withstood the most demanding tests. He maintained a personal friendship, concern, and correspondence with a French nobleman who deserted the Protestant cause to revert to Catholicism. His correspondence contains page after page of loving criticism of his colleagues. He writes to Melancthon and Bucer not to be too conciliatory and to Farel not to be too rambunctious, and throughout, friendship does not weaken or waver. He sends consoling letters of great beauty to prisoners incarcerated for their faith, as well as to widows and parents bereaved of their loved ones. His famous *Reply to Sadoletto* breathes the spirit of concern for the hapless Genevans if they fall again under the yoke of error, and the genuineness of his words is attested by his own subsequent return to the rescue of that city. Understanding of the common man and concern for his daily needs is evident on page after page of his down-to-earth sermons. Christian experience was not the starting-point or formative principle of his theology as it has been of other theologies. But he did not conceive of the Christian life without Christian experience. What better, more moving, more Biblical motivation could one find for earnest, profitable theological studies, than love of God expressed in concern for one's fellow man?

A final suggestion concerns the intellectual interests of Calvin. Those interests were *broad, but focussed*. John Calvin had a rather varied training, due not so much to his own choice as to the whims of his father. Part of that training may be described as pre-theological, when he studied the classics at the University of Paris. Part of it was non-theological, when he studied law at two other universities. Calvin was an able student of law, though he never seems to have been strongly committed to these studies. Nevertheless he used his law training ably in his later work. With the classics the story was different. At one time he was thoroughly in love with the classics, as is evident from his first published work, a commentary on Seneca's treatise on *Clemency*. But these broader studies, though abundantly useful in later years, were never allowed to take the place of his primary concentration on the Word of God.



What John Calvin studied he mastered, and brought into the service of his life's task. Whatever he had ever read seems to have been readily available to his memory. Few in our day, and probably no one of us here present, can approach him in the quality of his mental equipment. But we can seek to emulate the seriousness and earnestness with which he approached any branch of learning and any subject of study. And this will best be accomplished if we, too, seek a learning which is not narrowly limited, but on the other hand not loosely dissipated. The ideal of bringing wide learning into subjection to a worthy goal, when coupled with the necessary self-discipline, will carry us far toward the successful accomplishment of our tasks. At least it will help us to do the best we are capable of doing; and our task demands no less than this of us.

The concentration of Calvin's interests may be described as a system of concentric circles. He was interested in all of life; in the Church at the center of life; in the Word at the center of the Church; and in Christ as the center of the Word.

To his intellectual task he brought complete intellectual honesty. Calvin did not engage in double-talk. He had nothing to hide, and sought consistently to state as plainly as possible just what he believed. He never knowingly falsified Scripture. In his farewell address to the ministers of Geneva, he says,

As to my doctrine, I have taught faithfully, and God has given me grace to write what I have written as faithfully as it was in my power. I have not falsified a single passage of Scripture, nor given it a wrong interpretation to the best of my knowledge; and though I might have introduced subtle senses, had I studied subtlety, I cast that temptation under my feet and always aimed at simplicity.

Furthermore, Calvin was willing to recognize problems where they existed, and did not claim to have the answers to all of them. Of great importance is the fact that he did not dogmatically solve problems in which the final answer was not found in Scripture. The most notable example of this lies in his treatment of the mysteries of divine election. In this he was a true heir of the Western tradition in dogmatic discussions.

The formal principle of his concentration was the Word of God. This is evident in all of his work. His principal dogmatic work, the *Institutes*, is no exception to this rule, but rather may be called the prime example of it. But this concentration on the Word was conceived of according to principles of interpretation which have been guides to follow ever since his time. They were a big im-

provement over most of ancient and medieval interpretation of Scripture. They improved even on the faithful Waldenses of the Middle Ages, and such stalwart pre-Reformers as Wyclif and Huss. This improvement concerns the concentration on grammatical and historical interpretation, and the insistence that the unity of the Bible's message was to be sought. And as to the heart of that message, it can best be described as consisting in the saving knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. When his message is freed from the misinterpretation arising out of controversial points, this is what stands out.

THESE are professional suggestions. But by their very nature they become more than this. These suggest that we be professional in the best sense of the term; not as acting a role but as living a life. It is thus that he pictures himself and his fellow Reformers in his *Reply to Sadoletto*. Standing before the Lord, he confesses:

O Lord, I have indeed experienced how difficult and grievous it was to bear the invidious accusations with which I was harassed on the earth; but with the same confidence with which I then appealed to thy tribunal, I now appear before thee, because I know that in thy judgment truth always reigns . . . . They charged me with the two worst of crimes — heresy and schism. And the heresy was that I dared to protest against dogmas which they had received. But what could I have done? I heard from thy mouth that there was no other light of truth which could direct our souls into the way of life than that which was kindled by thy Word. I heard that whatever human minds of themselves conceive concerning thy Majesty, the worship of thy Deity, and the mysteries of thy religion, was vanity. I heard that their introducing into the Church instead of thy Word, doctrines sprung from the human brain, was sacrilegious presumption . . . . My conscience told me how strong the zeal was with which I burned for the unity of thy Church, provided thy truth were made the bond of concord . . . .

Thou, O Lord, knowest, and the fact itself has testified to men, that the only thing I asked was that all controversies should be decided by thy Word, that thus both parties might unite with one mind to establish thy kingdom; and I declined not to restore peace to the Church at the expense of my head, if I were found to have been unnecessarily the cause of tumult . . . . But although amidst the great confusion, the judgments of men were various, I am freed from all fear, now that we stand at thy tribunal, where equity, combined with truth, cannot but decide in favor of innocence.

It is such concentration, such devotion, and such a consciousness of standing in the presence of God that we must have, if the year now opening is to be truly successful. Let us strengthen and encourage one another in this, and also together seek the help of God, through whom we may have the victory



# Nicodemus and Education\*

*by Steve J. Vander Weele*

I have observed in the chapel services of past summer-school sessions a very fine practice, one which I should like to perpetuate this morning. That practice is this, that now and then, during the summer, a chapel speaker would address very directly the teachers in the audience. Teachers and teachers-to-be have always constituted a very high percentage of the summer-school enrollment. And it is right that we should now and then address them directly, recognize their fine contributions at every level of teaching, encourage them, and discuss with them some problem related to their work.

Perhaps by now you are suspicious. You know how it goes: the college teachers complain about the high-school teachers not preparing the students better. The high-school teachers find fault with the teachers at the junior-high level, who do the same to the intermediate teachers, who, in turn, insist that it is the teachers at the primary level who are at fault. The teacher at the elementary level has a way out, too: she lays the blame at the feet of the parents. And in one version the mother just shakes her head and observes: "It's no wonder my boy's that way; his father's folks are just the same." You suspect, perhaps, that I shall use this opportunity to address you who teach our students at a younger age to instruct you in your duties. I intend nothing of the sort. The problem I have in mind involves all of us and all of our students at every level of education.

To give some point to my remarks this morning, I should like to refer to a survey conducted fairly recently, one that received some attention in magazines and newspapers. The survey was intended to discover what effect college education was having on the opinions and attitudes of the students in some important areas of thought and life. The survey was intended, that is, to discover whether college education had served to modify or alter significantly the students' views about such subjects as religion, ethics, social problems, political preferences, professional objectives, and so on. Perhaps you remember how distressed educators were at the results of this survey. It seemed that college work had changed very few opinions which the students held prior to beginning their higher education. Education had apparently done little to compel

the students to re-examine the biases, prejudices, and attitudes with which they had come to college. Republicans were Republicans still, Democrats, likewise. There had been little migration from one religious denomination to another that could be traced to the students' formal education. Few felt that college had altered their thinking on the question of race relationships. The students had developed few new loyalties, and had become only slightly sympathetic towards other historical periods, or towards other nations, races, and civilizations. In other words, college had been for most students a rather placid experience, a period of acquisition rather than one of penetrating introspection, a period in which threats to new patterns of thinking had been successfully resisted.

Admittedly, there is something right and good about this. It is well that we should arrive at certain convictions early and abide by them and live by them. One does not do his best studying when he is beset with doubt about a host of basic questions. And if this survey had been made at Calvin College, we should expect our students to display a firmness in their convictions and commitment, a firmness implied by the beautiful words written over the entrance to our chapel: "In thy light shall we see light."

But after conceding the proper role of conviction, we all sense, I am sure, the real danger present when students refuse to submit their assumptions and attitudes to careful scrutiny. For it is undeniable that many so-called convictions and principles are founded on non-rational bases. They can often be traced to persons, events, circumstances, rather than be defended intelligently and rationally. An interesting incident occurred on this campus just last spring. A candidate for public office was presented to teachers and students for informal conversation and exchange of ideas. When pressed for an answer as to why he was — in this instance — a Democrat, he finally replied that it was probably because in his youth he had heard his father rail loudly and repeatedly against Wall Street. To be sure, something may indeed be acquired in the way of enlightenment and broadened perspective even when there is no change of opinion on anything significant or important. Students, that is, can somehow, and do, take courses and garner hours of credit and honor points and receive degrees, and something no doubt is achieved. But

\*A chapel talk, given in the 1959 summer session of Calvin College.



too often such education is merely quantitative and not qualitative. It becomes mere acquisition, and never gets into the blood stream, into "the business and bosoms of men," as it presumably should.

I should like now to consider with you the third chapter of the Gospel of John, the very dramatic story of the night visit of Nicodemus to Christ. And although this event is a rich source of spiritual and theological reflections, I shall be singling out especially the pedagogical importance of this dialogue.

As we read this event, we notice immediately that we have before us what seems to be, in modern idiom, and ideal teaching situation. We have an eager student — one who comes to his teacher after class, not, this time, to beg for more time for his report or to explain an absence, but for more information and enlightenment. We have also a master pedagogue, one whose competence the student acknowledges at the outset. But as we watch this highly fascinating drama, we begin to suspect the student. We begin to perceive that, despite his tribute to his teacher, the student has come primarily to have his interpretation of religious truth confirmed rather than challenged. But he does not get by with this. Christ knows his type: a leader of the Jews, morally respectable, of high repute, but a man whose understanding of the great mysteries of the faith is greatly deficient. Christ, I say, knows his type, and adapts His lesson to the student. He poses a metaphor to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is not surprising that Nicodemus stumbles over the metaphor, and asks one of the most impertinent questions recorded in Scripture: "How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

We may tend to be lenient towards Nicodemus and we may be tempted to defend him in such a way as this. We may say: Nicodemus is, after all, a plain blunt man, a man of no nonsense, one who wants things put on the line, a man impatient with fanciful language. He is, we may want to say, a scientist rather than a poet, and perhaps, we may add, Christ should have recognized this in his approach. But the answer is obvious. Christ makes no concession to poetic inadequacy. And if I may put in a good word for poetry here, I should like to point out that Christ assumes that truth does have a poetic dimension, and that part of being human is to be able to understand poetic truth as well as scientific truth. For, did you notice that, far from attempting a more literal approach, Christ uses still another metaphor. He says this time: "Marvel not

that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." And now Nicodemus is bewildered. He can say only, "How can these things be?"

I should like all of us, and especially teachers, to recognize that in a sense we are all Nicodemuses. No one of us is free from the danger of insisting that our formulation of the truth, partial and incomplete though it is, is yet absolute and final. Like Nicodemus we all resist instinctively any challenge to the body of opinion and assumption that we have built up. Like Nicodemus, we too often contend for victory rather than truth.

This truth about human nature, it seems to me, is of tremendous importance for teachers. We must recognize, and our students must learn from us, directly and indirectly, that life is complex, that many problems cannot be faced in terms of white or black, but rather in terms of varying shades of gray. We must both learn and teach that in a sinful and perverse world the problems of life as they come to us are not framed in an ideal way; that often we can do little more than choose the lesser of several evils and that the truth often comes in strange and unexpected forms. We must teach our students both by example and precept the virtue of the flexible mind, of the humility which refuses to equate one's partial understanding with the ultimate truth.

We all tend to do what Nicodemus did. He had the world packaged and categorized and tied neatly with a pretty ribbon. He conceived his task to be simply that of judging how nearly others approximated what to him was indisputably the correct notion of religion. But something about Christ's manner and witness had disturbed him; and he risked much — perhaps more than he realized — when he paid his visit to Jesus by night. We can understand the reason for his painful outbursts. We all find it extremely painful to part with our pet opinions and attitudes. To pull and tear our mental and spiritual adhesive tape is to surrender part of our very selves. For to change our national, or political, or religious opinions is to become, in part, at least, a different person. Such processes are painful, and only the hardy and the courageous can undergo them.

OUR denomination, with the Christian Church in general, faces some exceedingly difficult problems. There are formulations that have served past generations but which now require reappraisal. Fortunately, some of this is now going on. For example, a favorite assertion about Calvinism has been



that it is a balanced system: that Calvinism walks the razor's edge between concepts apparently mutually exclusive: God's sovereignty and man's free will, predestination and human responsibility, and the like. But it has been more recently pointed out that the metaphor of balance and symmetry (a heritage of seventeenth-century physics, apparent also in our early political documents) does grave injustice to our theology, and that there is a glorious imbalance and asymmetry in God's condescending and redemptive love.

The issue of united theological training is also a problem with which we have had to wrestle. For many of us it was a highly instructive experience in our church life. It helped to bring to our attention the momentous import of such developments as the decline of colonialism, the rise of nationalism, the whole new concept of missions in areas overseas. But some among us were fearful, supposing that God's sovereignty could not be maintained in the proposed venture of a joint seminary.

There are other problems which cannot be suppressed much longer. I hear our science people say that we must have a much longer and harder look at the discoveries of biologists — even evolutionary biologists — (notice well that I do not say the conclusions or the philosophical-religious interpretations imposed upon these discoveries) than we have been willing to give up to now.

Some interesting things are also being said about ways other than the conventional sermon of reaching people with the gospel in present-day America. It is being suggested by those at the frontiers of this work that perhaps the book review and the forum are valuable supplements to the worship services.

New questions are being asked about the motivation of our Christian schools, partly, I suppose, because we have come to see that too often in the past that motivation has been — perhaps unconsciously — primarily sociological. Again, it was revelation, was it not, for us to learn, during our centennial year, when we investigated the antecedents of our denomination anew, how large a part personalities and resistance to Americanization were factors in the origins of our church.

The whole nature of the role of grace in theology is being re-examined, and some strikingly new observations are being made in this area.

And it has been said recently that being a Democrat is not incompatible with the Christian faith.

BUT all these suggestions, all these gropings and all this inquiry is meeting with sharp criticism, often accompanied with the lament, Why can't we keep on in the old ways? I am not commenting

specifically on these problems, or saying that everything new is good and the old is inferior. I am saying only this, that we must develop a maturity among us that will welcome, and not fear, this kind of creative thinking with detachment, with equanimity, with cool heads and sober minds. I am saying that we should not fear, but eagerly and enthusiastically welcome a new examination of such problems as these, many of which are intimately related to our contemporary situation. We must be on time as we explore ways to challenge our culture and our world. We do the gospel a disservice by being tardy in our methods and approach. Lacking this maturity, there is little but distress and anguish ahead for our church. With it, we can grow from grace to grace, arriving continually at new insights and a progressively richer understanding of reality. Paul, you will remember, became all things to all men that he might win some.

I trust that no one will caricature what I have been saying this morning by supposing that I have been pleading for fickleness, whimsicality, caprice, a continual shifting of opinion, a lack of conviction. We must continue to have men and women of determination and sound principle. But this other remains true also. Consider Nicodemus once again. He made a good end, even though he feared his colleagues and probably was a long time in telling them about his evening session with Christ. But some time before he became one of those who dared to go to Pilate to ask for the body of Christ, he perceived the higher truth which Christ had taught him. Somewhere he discovered that mere theological statement is mute and silent until it is expressed in the poetry of grace.

It is this kind of experience that I covet for us all. That not with the attitude of skepticism, or doubt, but rather with one of genuine piety, we should continually scrutinize our understanding of truth, of the destiny of man, of his limitations, of his glory. This process is hazardous, and cannot be undertaken without adequate use of all of the means of grace. But it must be done, for an inadequate interpretation rigidly held is always a barrier to a more accurate one.

Education requires demolition as well as construction. I covet for us all, and for our students, the exhilarating experience of leaving behind the shed chrysalis and the outgrown shell of our imperfect apprehensions of things. Needless to say, this process will have to go on — in our church, in education, in our private lives —, until the day dawns and the day star appears, when we shall see perfectly what we can at present see only through a glass darkly.



# The Distortion of Denominational Ideals: *Traditionalism*

by Simon J. De Vries

ASSUREDLY one indication of the true church is that it is clear about the ideals which Christ has set for it, and another is that it recognizes the degree of its failure to attain these ideals. Wherever a denomination becomes confused about either of these, forgetting the high mark of the church's calling on the one hand or imagining on the other that it has already attained to it, it has by that very fact lost its identity as part of the true church and has become either apostate or sectarian.

Our denomination is devoted to certain concrete ideals, all of which are inculcated by the Gospel itself for the guidance of everyone who calls himself a Christian. Without attempting to enumerate them all, I have singled out for discussion four ideals which our church has specially cherished but which are constantly being distorted in practice. The distortion of each of these ideals follows the same pattern. Each tends to be reduced through *absolutization*. That is, by being made more important than they deserve to be or by being allowed to become ends in themselves; apart from the higher goal of the glory of God and true obedience to Christ, they have been turned into things of evil.

The essence of this whole process is idolatry, the erecting of false "gods" in the place of that which claims our rightful devotion. Many good and legitimate things become false gods when they are allowed to become ends in themselves, when they are desired for their own sake and not for God's greater glory. Money becomes Mammon; self-respect becomes ruthless egotism; power and prestige, which might be used in God's service and for the good of mankind, are glorified only for their own sake; sexual attraction becomes brutish sensuality; inventions testifying to the greatness of man's spirit lead instead to man's degradation; even the offices and distinctions of religion may lead to hypocrisy and tyranny. Also so even the highest ideals, when sought for themselves, may be turned into idols.

Four great ideals which I see in constant danger of becoming absolutized in our denomination are (1) respect for tradition, (2) recognition of the value and authority of doctrine, (3) obedience to the Law of God, and (4) the desire for denominational purity. All of these are very excellent in themselves. But our respect for tradition tends to

harden into a barren traditionalism. Our doctrine concern degenerates into a scholastic dogmatism. Our moral earnestness leads us into legalism. Our desire for purity betrays us into the snare of separatism. The gravest danger in all these "isms" is that they resemble so closely the legitimate ideals whose place they usurp. We scarcely realize when we have crossed over the almost imperceptible boundary between the good and the evil.

As I discuss these four absolutizations of legitimate denominational ideals in successive issues of this *Journal* I intend to compare present practice with the teaching of Scripture, and, because this is especially appropriate in a Calvin anniversary year, I shall try to show how far we have departed from those same ideals as they were maintained by our own spiritual forefather the great Reformer. I begin with a discussion of Traditionalism.

TRADITIONALISM is the absolutization of tradition. Tradition in the abstract has no moral value. There may be good tradition and bad tradition. The evil in traditionalism consists not so much in exchanging a good for a bad tradition as in making even a good tradition absolute.

Tradition may be defined as a body of customs and teachings which are handed down from generation to generation. We ought to respect the good traditions of our spiritual community. There are some evil elements in our tradition, let us confess. For instance, the narrowness and the spirit of schism which goes back in our *afgescheiden* tradition ought not to be cherished but greatly deplored. But in general we enjoy a tradition of integrity, courage, loyalty, and Christian devotion. We have a tradition that honors the Word of God, that respects sound doctrine, maintains moral earnestness, and promotes the purity of the church.

Thus my complaint is not that our tradition as a whole is bad. My complaint is rather that many have allowed a tradition that is worthy in many respects to become so absolutely normative that we refuse to adapt it to new challenges. Claiming that the old is best simply because it is old, we have let our tradition stand in the way of Christian progress, and in certain instances have maintained it even in direct violation of the commandments of Christ.



I shall presently specify instances where this absolutization has appeared among us, but first I want to call attention to the attitude of one of the great men whom we honor in our tradition toward the evil of traditionalism. I am thinking of John Calvin. Reformed traditionalists will look to him in vain for an example. Calvin was of course conservative in the sense that he held fast to the authentic teachings of the Holy Scriptures. It might even be said that he was reactionary because he deliberately turned back from the erroneous dogma of his times to the teaching of the ancient church. "Back to God" and "back to the Bible" were slogans with which Calvin surely could have sympathized. And yet, in opposing Roman Catholic traditionalism he was anything but conservative. Calvin and Luther were actually counted among the most liberal spirits of their time. This only shows how relative the terms "conservative" and "liberal" really are. Their meaning is determined by the standpoint of the one who judges. The Reformers were progressive. It might even be maintained that they were radicals. The Papists thought of them as such, condemning them as enemies and dangerous heretics; and, indeed, in their opposition to Catholic traditionalism, dogmatism, legalism, and separatism the Reformers were as radical as they needed to be.

There was no other course open to them. The first generation of Reformers had cherished the hope that Rome would accept reform when she was persuaded that the Scriptures condemn many of her practices and beliefs, and even Calvin in his generation continued to work for such a change of heart. But Catholic traditionalism answered their plea with anathemas and excommunications. Thus the Reformers were compelled, out of simple loyalty to Christ, to break with the tradition that had smothered them and in which they still saw much good. It cost them dearly to do this, but when the choice came, they knew which way they had to go. Despite wide differences in temperament and outlook among them the Reformers stood together at this point. Catholic traditionalism was plainly condemned by the living Gospel to which they all adhered.

BUT after this ecclesiastical house-cleaning the pattern of traditionalism soon reappeared both in Lutheranism and Calvinism. The doctrine, liturgy and church polity of the Genevan Reformer were given a high authority by his followers. This development was perfectly natural and was not necessarily harmful in itself. An authoritative tradition may be beneficial for the life of the church as long as it does not resist improvements. Calvin himself knew that his system was only relatively

complete and expected corrections. His spirit was indeed that which is expressed in the slogan, *Reformata est semper reformanda!* But in the generations after Calvin's death Reformed theology began to harden more and more into an unproductive orthodoxy. The same thing was happening in the Lutheran Church. Both branches of Protestantism had already lost the momentum of protest. Having reformed the Catholic tradition they neglected the task of continuing to reform their own and descended to quibbling and bickering among themselves.

After a while, some of the Reformation churches regained a progressive spirit — as a matter of fact, some of them have "advanced" so far by this time that they have lost all contact with the authentic Protestant (not to say the authentic Christian) tradition. One wonders, however, to what degree some of these groups have been driven to excess out of sheer reaction against the dead traditionalism that they have observed in many of the Reformation churches. Some of the worst examples of this have appeared in our own somber Dutch brand of Calvinism.

For Reformed traditionalists the Roman Pope has lost his authority, but another almost absolute authority has arisen to take his place. For them the reformation of the church ended in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What is set forth in the creedal statements, liturgy, and church order of that period is now looked upon as inviolable. There is henceforth no sweeping improvement to be expected or allowed, either in these written documents or in the body of practices associated with them. It seems that there is nothing more for our generation to do. We are no longer looking for the truth, because we already have it. The theological task of the church is completed, except for disputing about minutiae of doctrine. Although the Protestant heritage is being challenged today at its very foundations by tremendously formidable antagonists, traditionalism soothes us into believing that what the forefathers once said is all the answer that we ever need to give. Some of us never think that perhaps this modern era does have something to say to us that we desperately need to hear.

THE Christian Reformed Church calls itself conservative, and there can be no doubt that all who belong to its membership are proud of and grateful for that designation. A question that should be asked, however, is, "Conservative of *what?*" Conservative of the true Gospel and of the authentic Reformed tradition, working to preserve the eter-



nally valid insights of our rich heritage while adapting them creatively to meet the demands of each succeeding age — or simply immovable and sterile within a wall of isolation and obscurantism, burying the treasure of the fathers in the earth?

Have we given to something that is only relative (our Reformed tradition) an almost absolute authority? If so, our true ideal has been distorted. We are worshipping in the temple of traditionalism.

The clearest mark of traditionalism is its resistance to change when change is plainly shown to be needed. A hopeful fact about our denomination is that it has proven itself to be somewhat amenable to constructive change, particularly in recent years. But it can hardly be disputed that in general our denomination has been very reluctant to accept changes, even when these have represented obvious improvements. How much of this is due to commendable caution and how much to sheer traditionalism is not always easy to say.

An antipathy to the singing of hymns was long maintained, this having been an issue in the secessions of 1834 and 1857 but finally this gave way before a more reasonable spirit, although some among us still scorn any songs but the Psalms of David. The introduction of choirs and of floral decorations in the church has long been resisted, despite all that could be said for them. We have doggedly adhered to the precise form of the Reformation liturgy even though the historical circumstances which gave rise to many of its peculiarities have long since disappeared. Thus we constantly repeat the stern denunciation of "gross sins" appearing in our Communion Form, not seeming to realize that the strong didactic and hortatory character of this Form was suitable for confronting the Libertines of sixteenth-century Geneva but is scarcely as edifying as it should be in the church of today.

The letter of tradition still carries a lot of weight among us, sometimes to the virtual extinction of the spirit. I shall never lose the impression of dead conformity that I received while worshipping from Sunday to Sunday in one of the *Gereformeerde* churches of the Netherlands. The members of that congregation still insist on bringing their infants for Baptism as soon as possible after they are born, and thus, because there were many babies on almost every Lord's Day afternoon the Baptismal Form had to be read over again. As the minister droned out the solemn words, I was shocked but not altogether surprised to observe that not only the majority of the congregation but even some of the parents were scarcely listening,

and many seemed to be sound asleep. But why should they have listened? They were wearied to death by that Form! Yet it is a safe guess that the routine had been altered in any way, a chorus of protests would have immediately arisen.

I am not suggesting that every church in the Netherlands has succumbed to sheer traditionalism nor would I suggest this of any of our churches. Nonetheless, the pattern is altogether too familiar to us. Our churches do many things out of mere custom. Before Communion we faithfully carry out the letter of Article 81 of the Church Order although this has become a meaningless gesture for most office-bearers. We closely follow the venerable practice of setting up duos or trios before calling a minister, usually, without trying to determine beforehand whether the names we have chosen are really suitable, or, on the other hand, even though we know that only one of the names is really suitable. (The worst of it is that we excuse our stupidity by calling it "the leading of the Holy Spirit!")

But undoubtedly the most harmful form of traditionalism is that which prevents us from making a truly effective approach to the communities in which we live. We are too well satisfied to remain by ourselves, secluded in our comfortable isolation to make the changes and sacrifices required for effective evangelism and community witness.

Another harmful kind of traditionalism is the dogmatism that hampers creative theological discussion among us. As a matter of fact, the three remaining "isms" which I propose to describe in the following articles are all unwholesome forms of traditionalism.

Going back to something I wrote at the very beginning, I repeat that the essence of absolutization is idolatry. We do not intend it that way but in effect that is what it really is. Christ has set certain ideals for us to follow, but each in its proper relation. When traditionalism hampers progress to better discipleship, when it is allowed to obstruct the working of the Holy Spirit and to hinder the Gospel, then the dispensation of Christ has been supplanted by the vagaries of men. Then our tradition has virtually become our idol.

The Christian Reformed Church sincerely desires to be identified as part of Christ's true church. It is well, then, that it hold fast to the ideal of respect for all that is worthy in its tradition, and repudiate all that is unworthy. It must criticize and not idolize its tradition. In the measure that it does this, it will be a true church; in the measure that it fails, it will show itself to be a mere sect, enamored more with the opinions of men than with the commandments of God.



# The Gospel and History\*

by Leonard Sweetman, Jr.

IN what way is one able to defend a Christocentric approach to the entire Scriptures without doing violence to the Old Testament? In which way can one approach the Scriptures from the perspective offered by the redemptive-historical viewpoint without doing violence to the Old Testament? How can one maintain the unity of the Testaments without doing violence to the integrity of the Old Testament's redemptive history?

Various answers have been advanced. Most of them can be grouped under the classification "Prophecy and Fulfillment." That which is prophesied in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. That which points to Christ in the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in the incarnation, the sufferings, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. At this point, however, one must exercise caution. Precisely how is one to understand the nature of prophecy? Is one to understand prophecy as a jig-saw puzzle containing a picture on both sides? According to this understanding, in the Old Testament the prophets' message, when put together, forms a picture, a non-objective, abstract design. Turn the completed puzzle over, and you find the lucid, objective, photographlike New Testament picture with each piece in its proper place. The Old Testament is a rough sketch, lacking detail and coherence. The New Testament side is a sharply defined photograph. But I fear that this sort of approach initiates the concept of redemptive history. The Old Testament's witness to Christ, from this perspective, is nothing but a series of isolable word symbols which find their reality in Christ. They are unrelated. And the history in which they occur loses its redemptive significance.

Calvin considered Old Testament history as progressing toward a goal. He indicated that the content or "substance" of the New Covenant was identical to the "substance" of the Old Covenant; nevertheless, the administration of the Covenants differs.<sup>1</sup> "The manifestation of Christ was the goal of the race which God's ancient people were running . . . they directed their view to the fullness which did not arrive till Christ was revealed."<sup>2</sup> J. Chr.

Hoffmann, following Coccejus and Bengel, stressed the fact that "God had revealed himself in an historical development which only gradually unfolded through different stages as an organic whole moving toward a goal."<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm Visscher, in *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, insists that "the unity of the Scriptures can only be maintained by seeing also in the Old Testament a direct witness to Christ since there is no break in the solidarity of faith between the Testaments."<sup>4</sup>

WHEN we read the New Testament, we find that the word used most frequently for the act of fulfilling is *pleroo*.<sup>5</sup> This word, furthermore, is a translation of the Hebrew root *male*. In the *qal* the word means "to fill" or "to be full." This spatial connotation is enlarged to include a temporal connotation in some *qal* and *niphal* occurrences.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the Hebrew system of time emphasizes the quality of an action rather than temporal sequence. As he thought of time, the Hebrew thought in terms of totality, wholeness. "When passing time with its content formed a totality, it was said to be filled in the same way a receptacle with its content together formed a whole."<sup>7</sup> This perspective, moreover, extends to the idea of "filling words." In I Kings 2:27 we find this idea set forth clearly. "So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord; that he might fulfil the word of the Lord, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh." We find the same idea present in Jeremiah 44:25: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her; ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows." The word which is prophetic of the act, together with the act, constitute a totality, a whole.

Furthermore, according to the Hebrew's thought pattern, that word which in this fashion fills itself is true. The word which does not fill itself is empty, and possesses no reality. A true word realizes the

\* The first part of this article appeared in the July-August issue of the *Journal*. The second and concluding part here follows.

1. R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), p. 52.

2. John Calvin, Commentary on Psalm 102:23 (quoted in Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 59).

3. J. Chr. Hoffman, *Heilsgeschichte* (quoted in Brevard S. Childs, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," *Interpretation*, XVII: 3, July 1958, p. 261).

4. Quoted in Childs, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

5. For the view set forth here, I am dependent upon Brevard S. Childs, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-271.

6. Cf. Genesis 25:24; Numbers 6:13; Genesis 50:3.

7. Childs, *op. cit.*, 265.



purpose for which it is sent. God's faithfulness, for example, is demonstrated because He "with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth . . ." (II Chron. 6:4). This is a true word.

It should be emphasized that the word forms a totality with the event or act of which it is prophetic. If one regards prophecy and fulfillment in terms of identical correspondence, similar to the jig-saw puzzle with pictures on both sides to which I made reference earlier, then one ignores the history between the prophecy and fulfillment. This history loses its redemptive character. The length of time that elapses between the prophecy and the fulfillment is of little consequence for the Hebrew. The prophecy and fulfillment are regarded as being of one piece. "The word sets an event into motion which is then filled up. A filled word is one which has reached wholeness and, therefore, is fulfilled. The *kairos* of both the word and the event are the same. The *chronos* is, however, different, and it is during this time that the creative word strives for its filling. The length of time which is needed for the word to reach its completion is not decisive."<sup>8</sup> When the event, moreover, is full, that event is fulfilled. The filled event authenticates itself. It evidences to its own fulfillment. The Hebrew is not capable of dissociating the content of a word from its fulfillment.

In the Gospels the evangelists witness to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the prophetic word of the Old Testament era. Furthermore, the Gospels do not attempt to argue the fulfillment of the prophetic word in Christ. They give witness to that which they have heard and seen. The evangelists discerned in the Old Testament era, when viewed from the mid-point, the Christ-event, in the light of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the struggling for fulfillment, for wholeness, characteristic of the creative word as this was mediated through the prophets. Not merely the prophetic words are filled in Christ, historical events, too, are filled in Him. In John's Prologue, the Creation is said to be filled in Christ. In Matthew 2:15, the Exodus is said to be filled in Christ. And, in Matthew 5, the Giving of the Law is said to be filled in Christ.

THE phenomenon of the Hebrew which has been alluded to accounts, I suspect, for much of the discussion relative to prophetic material in the Old Testament. Do the Suffering Servant psalms refer to an individual, or to a collective? Do prophetic materials refer to a person who is a contemporary of the prophet? Or do they ignore all of history intervening between the prophetic words and their

being filled in Jesus Christ? I believe that, although the Suffering Servant psalms are rooted in the age of the Exile, they are empty until in Christ they are filled. Through the intervening history, however, the prophetic word was struggling for fullness, for wholeness, for totality. This struggle, along with the original prophetic word and its being filled in Christ, constitute the whole, the totality of the prophetic word. Moreover, I suspect this is true relative to the prophetic word concerning the Son of Man in Daniel.<sup>9</sup>

Does this not account, moreover, for the increasingly evident use of these passages in the apocalyptic literature of the inter-testamental period? Finally, as the prophetic word comes to fulfillment by being filled in Christ, all "the fragmentary events of the Old Testament are interpreted in the light of their fullness and given their true dimension."<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, then, "it is essential in New Testament Christology that from the time of creation onward Christ is linked with the *entire* history of revelation and salvation. There is no redemptive history without Christology. There is no Christology without a redemptive history which develops in time."<sup>11</sup>

NOT only is the entire Old Testament era, in this fashion, given its dimension in terms of the mid-point — the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ — but the period between the Resurrection and the Parousia, too, is constantly to be subjected to the mid-point. This fact, largely, explains the formation of the New Testament Canon. The role of the apostles is a dual role. They are part and parcel of the forming Body of Christ, of the Church of the era of the Church. As such, however, they occupy a highly specialized function. They are the foundation on which is erected the Church of Christ. Therefore they occupy a special niche which disappears with their death. Nevertheless, they play another role. This was recognized by the Primitive Church in her declaration of the Canon. The apostolic writings are themselves part of the mid-point. As such they constitute a norm in terms

9. On this score, the statement of F. F. Bruce is instructive. He writes relative to the Qumran community: "Their duty, as they conceived it, was nothing less than the fulfillment of the role appointed for the obedient and suffering Servant of the Lord in Isa. 52:13-53:12. The community was to realize not only the figure of the Servant of the Lord who makes many to be accounted righteous, but also the figure of that 'one like a son of man' who, in Daniel's night vision, receives from the Ancient of Days authority to execute judgment and wield eternal and universal dominion (Dan. 7:13f., 22)." *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), pp. 102-103.

10. Childs, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

11. Oscar Cullmann, *Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments* (quoted by F. Filson in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. LXXVII: Part II, June 1958, p. 163).

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268.



which the traditions of the Church from a certain moment on are evaluated. The New Testament as a whole belongs to the mid-point.

In the era of the Church, all her formulations, all her teachings, all her traditions must be subjected to the mid-point. The Church in all her activities stands between the mid-point and the consummation; between the Resurrection and the Parousia. She looks backward to the mid-point as she looks forward to the consummation. Her hope in the consummation, the Parousia, is certain because it is founded upon, oriented to, the Resurrection. This is seen, for example, in the celebration of the Supper. The Supper points back to the death of Christ as the sacrifice for sin, as God's reconciling act which was performed *for us*. At the same time, the Supper looks forward to the consummation. This is the symbolism of the Messianic banquet. This idea, moreover, is found in the words of the tradition reported by Paul in I Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

In her prophetic office, her teaching ministry, too, the Church is oriented to what God has done in Christ. She is oriented to the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the once-for-all event in which redemption, salvation, life are given. Yet, at the same time, the missionary proclamation of the Church is a sign of the End, of the consummation. In Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14, the proclamation of the Gospel is one of the signs of the End. The coming of the Kingdom, it is indicated, is not dependent upon the success of the missionary proclamation. It is the *fact* of Gospel proclamation which is declared to be the sign of the End. As the Church proclaims the Good Message of Jesus Christ, she can confidently expect the coming of the End. She has no right, therefore, to date the coming of the End. The signs of the End give her confident hope; they do not provide a blueprint which she can use to calculate the End, to define, precisely or otherwise, how close she stands to the End. On this score, Jesus indicates, even the Son knows not the *chronos* of the End (Mark 13:32).

As the Church observes the signs of the End, and as she engages faithfully in the proclamation of the Good Message, which proclamation, itself, is a sign of the End, she lives confidently and in hope, confessing that the Crucified, Resurrected Christ of the mid-point is her Lord. The earliest Christian confession of faith, New Testament scholars agree generally, was the confession that Christ is Lord. This is the confession of Romans 10:9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that

God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This confession, moreover, as used in the Primitive Church, included the dominion of Christ over the invisible world as well as the visible world. Christ is the Lord of all. This is the glorious conclusion of Philippians 2:10-11: "Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father." The heavenly beings, the earthly beings, and the subterranean beings shall bow at the name of Jesus the Lord. This Kingship, therefore, is universal. This confession, moreover, was universally used in the Church's missionary proclamation. It was used in missionary preaching as well as in catechetical instruction. It was used in exorcism. It was used in persecution. And it was used in polemical discussions.<sup>12</sup>

SINCE the missionary proclamation is a sign of the End, there is compulsion, is there not, in the mission of the Church. Paul recognized the compulsion involved in proclaiming the Good Message. Paul recognized the necessity of heralding the Good Message to all men, indicated as a sign of the End in the Little Apocalypse. All *must* have the opportunity to hear the Good Message. This is the compulsion of which Paul thinks as he writes I Corinthians 9:16, "For though I preach the gospel I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Furthermore, Cullmann suggests this understanding of missionary proclamation as the key to II Thessalonians 2:6-8, in which both the Greek neuter, and masculine, forms of "restrain" occur. Cullmann suggests that the neuter form indicates the proclamation of the Gospel, whereas the masculine form points to the one proclaiming the Gospel — Paul, himself. The proclamation of the Gospel is a sign of Christ's Lordship over the cosmos, over thrones, principalities, dominions and powers. *And then*, subsequent to the proclamation of the Gospel by the Church, the manifestation of Christ's presence on earth, the End shall come.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the missionary proclamation of the Church gives the era between the Resurrection and the Parousia its dimension in the history of redemption.

THIS understanding of the Gospel in terms of the history of redemption provides, I believe, the contemporary mission of the Christian Church with a motivation which will spur her on in her program of witness to the Good Message of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Furthermore, her message is rooted in history, and declares a Saviour and Lord who in history redeems all of history.

12. O. Cullman, *Die erste christliche Glaubensbekenntnisse*. See Chapter 2.

13. O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, pp. 163-165.



Again, this message with its Christological orientation is one which is derived from the whole of the Scriptures. It preserves the unity of the Testaments. It gives a function to the Old Testament, a dimension, if you will, which is necessary if the Christian faith is going to be spared from disintegrating into a philosophy of life.

During the past several years I have had the opportunity to hear a fairly large number of sermons in many different churches which, I suspect, are fairly representative of the spectrum of Japanese Christianity. I have never heard a sermon based on an Old Testament text. The Old Testament is, by and large, a closed book in Japan. This, moreover, is true for other areas in Asia. In fact, attempts have been made to rationalize this situation. Some have said that Buddhism has prepared Japan for Christ in somewhat the same manner that Old Testament Israel was prepared for Christ. The history of Israel, however, is not to be thought of as normative. Each people, each milieu, has been prepared for the Christ in terms of her own genius. This, I fear, distorts the message of Christianity, and results in regarding Christianity as a philosophy of life competing with other philosophies for the allegiance of men as a viable option to which life can be oriented.

PERMIT me to make one more point, briefly. Increasingly, Biblical scholars are recognizing the need of taking seriously the milieu which produced the Scriptures to understand the concepts used in declaring the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Long ago Geerhardus Vos stated this necessity powerfully as he investigated the Pauline eschatology. In commenting upon the importance of understanding Jewish eschatology for a proper appraisal of Pauline eschatology, Vos wrote that in spite of obvious differences between the two "there is no escape from the conclusion that a piece of Jewish theology has been here by Revelation incorporated into the

Apostle's teaching. Paul had none less than Jesus Himself as a predecessor in this. The main structure of the Jewish Apocalyptic is embodied in our Lord's teaching as well as in Paul's."<sup>14</sup>

New Testament scholarship, since the time of H.A.A. Kennedy, Hoskyns and Vos, on through the present, has increasingly recognized that the concepts and ideas found in the New Testament are dependent upon the Old Testament and Judaistic Theology, both of which reflect the milieu from which they sprang. One need not erect theories in which alien ideas and concepts were imported from the Hellenistic world in order to account for the New Testament. The Scriptures came out of a Jewish milieu, selected by God, and then were filled in Christ in order that the world may be saved.

Much is being written at present relative to the value of the Qumran documents for our understanding of Christianity. W. F. Albright summed up the matter well, I think, when he wrote that "perhaps the most important service of the Dead Sea scrolls will be the demonstration which may be brought from them that John, the Synoptics, St. Paul, and various other books draw from a common reservoir of terminology and ideas which were well known to the Essenes and presumably familiar also to other Jewish sects of the period."<sup>15</sup>

THE point I have been trying to demonstrate is clear, I trust. We have a historical Gospel which declares God's redemption effected in history. The Gospel is rooted in history. God promised salvation in history. In history, Christ filled these promises, so fulfilling them when He died and rose again for the redemption of the world. Without this perspective the Old Testament may well be lost and the Gospel distorted.

14. Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1953), pp. 27-28, note 36.


15. W. F. Albright, "Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St. John," *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, W. D. Davies, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 169.

Quality Christian Literature • Quality Christian Literature • Quality Christian Literature • Quality Christian Literature •

**Helpful to Parents, Pastors and Teachers**

**THE NURTURE AND EVANGELISM OF CHILDREN**

By GIDEON YODER



How shall the child enter the Kingdom? At what age should he be baptized? At what age should he become a church member? How shall he be integrated into the organized church?

Parents, pastors and teachers will find a great deal of illumination on the spiritual development of children in this work. It will help parents converse with their children on subjects of deep concern. Although written from the point of view of those churches that practice adult baptism, it provides a fair comparison of the process of nurture in churches of both traditions. \$3.00

Order from your Bookstore or Dept. RJ

**HERALD PRESS • SCOTSDALE, PENNSYLVANIA**

Quality Christian Literature • Quality Christian Literature • Quality Christian Literature • Quality Christian Literature •

Your Standard of  
Excellence since 1912

## PULPIT ROBES

To be sure of your  
best appearance and  
long-lasting pleasure,  
insist on our  
hand-sewn, custom-  
tailored robes.



ROBES FOR YOUR CHOIR, TOO

Write for catalog F-7

**BENTLEY & SIMON**

7 West 36 St.

New York 18, N.Y.



## BOOK REVIEW

EDUCATIONAL IDEALS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD. By William Barclay. London: Collins, 1959. \$3.00.

Reviewed by LESTER DEKOSTER

Based upon the Kerr Lectures, delivered in Trinity College, Glasgow, 1957, this book by the Lecturer in New Testament Language and Literature, University of Glasgow, describes the Jewish, the Spartan, the Athenian, the Roman, and the early Christian ideals and methods of education. The style is popular and entrancing; the work abounds in quotation from both primary and secondary sources, seasoned with anecdote and side-light. The author amply disproves his early quotation from T. R. Glover that "to be tedious it is only necessary to discuss education."

\* \* \*

Jewish education he divides into pre- and post-Ezra periods, the former largely home training and the latter performed more extensively in school and synagogue. Always, Jewish education was entirely religious education, resting heavily on oral instruction and amazing memorization, aiming at wisdom, and profoundly respectful of the child. Appreciation of the work of mind and of hand went together, as Professor Barclay quotes from *Ecclesiasticus*:

"The wisdom of the Scribe cometh by opportunity of leisure;  
And he that hath little business shall become wise . . . .  
. . . every artificer and workmaster,  
All these put their trust in their hands;  
And each becometh wise in his own work . . . .  
They maintain the fabric of the world;  
And in the handiwork of their craft  
is their prayer."

\* \* \*

In no other country prior to the modern totalitarian state was education "ever so deliberately planned, controlled, and designed by the state as in Sparta." The rise of the common enemy, so to say, in place of the heroic warrior caused Sparta deliberately to train every citizen for his place in war. His goal set the pattern and framework of Spartan education, training youth for "employment in public service, considering that they belonged

entirely to their country, and not to themselves," as the author quotes from Plutarch's *Lycurgus*.

\* \* \*

Athenian education was "never technical education." The Greek ideal was "unlimited leisure, in which unlimited culture could be acquired." Though this culture, too, had its end: "The education we speak of," wrote Plato in the *Laws*, "is training from childhood in goodness, which makes a man eagerly desirous of becoming a perfect citizen, understanding how both to rule and to be ruled righteously." *Liberal* and *leisure* were co-ordinates in Athens, and said Plato: "An upbringing which aims only at money-making, or physical strength, or even some mental accomplishment devoid of reason and justice," would be "vulgar and illiberal and utterly unworthy of the name 'education'."

But, as Heraclitus had said, Polymathy does not give a man sense," and therefore mere heaping up of erudition was not the end of Greek leisure. Probably it was, rather, the fusing of the ancient ideals of the man of valor — typified by Achilles — and of the man of wisdom — typified by Odysseus — into the *citizen* who sought the good in the service of the state: it was this ideal which set the goal of the schools of Hellas.

\* \* \*

The Romans, of peasant stock and never quite divorced from their humble

origins, thought of education as a "training which should fit a man for his duty to the gods, the state, and the family." Education was initiation into a tradition, and for generations most of the training went on in the home, relatively untouched by state control. Said Juvenal: "The greatest reverence is due to the boy," and, as Aubrey Gwynn phrased it: "The chief merit of Roman education was that it fostered a reverence for childhood which made every boy and girl an object of almost religious veneration."

\* \* \*

In his transition to the educational ideal of the early Church, the author has a chapter on "The Christian Attitude to Pagan Culture." He passes through the gamut from those Fathers who rejected pagan learning altogether through those who deliberately sought to carry off the fruits of ancient culture after the manner of the Israelitish spoil of Egypt, to those Fathers who recognized the Logos in all learning.

It is surprising, the author observes, that despite the importance attached to the child in the New Testament there is so little concretely directed to his education. So it is with the Apostolic Fathers. "The surprising truth is that never at any time either in New Testament times or in the days of the Early Church did the Church ever provide any kind of general education for her children . . . . She provided careful and detailed instruction for her catechumens, and for her ministry, but for her children she provided none at all." Christian children were educated, therefore, "in the ordinary and normal secular schools." Even Tertullian, who forbids the Christian to be a schoolmaster in an institution whose curricu-

## Halley's Bible Handbook

(Formerly known as "Pocket Bible Handbook")

Now in its 22nd Edition

It is an Abbreviated Bible Commentary, with Notes on Books of the Bible, their Historical, Geographical and Chronological Backgrounds, with 75 Illustrative Maps;

Amazing Archaeological Discoveries, Confirming or Illustrating Bible History, with 78 Authentic Photographic Reproductions;

Related Historical Data from the Annals of Babylon, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome, touching the Bible Story;

How We Got the Bible, Formation of Old and New Testaments, Apocryphal Books, Manuscripts and Early Christian Writings;

An Epitome of Church History, Connecting Bible Times with Our Own, Early Church Fathers, Persecutions, Rise of the Papacy, the Popes, Luther and the Reformation.

And Select Bible Verses

There is nothing published, of its size, that has anything like as much practical Bible information. (Further particulars sent on request)

4 x 6½ x 1½ inches, 968 Pages Cloth Bound \$3.00

Order from your Bookstore or H. H. HALLEY, Box 774, Chicago 90, Ill.

NEARLY A  
MILLION

in Print

With the new revised and enlarged 22nd Edition there have been 965,000 copies of Halley's Bible Handbook made available to earnest seekers of the Word.



lum rests so heavily as did that of the contemporary schools upon the pagan literatures, argues that for the children of the Church "secular education is a complete necessity." For, he maintained, the learner may reject, while the teacher must endorse the poisons of pagan wisdom; and, there are no other schools to which children can go. For those boys and girls destined to celibacy in the service of their Lord, Jerome outlines a closely supervised course of study, "far more concerned with the transmission of life than with the transmission of facts." And for all of its youth, the Church "saw that in the last analysis the only true teachers of any child are the parents of that child."

\* \* \*

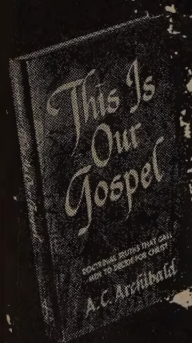
The author's last sentence sums up in a happy way the Christian ideal: "The child is the gift of God to the parent, and the child must be the gift of the parent to God."

The book well repays in pleasure, insight, and stimulation a careful reading of it.

## Basic Doctrines of Christianity

### *This Is Our Gospel*

by Arthur C. Archibald



Twelve sermons, both doctrinal and evangelistic, consider such Christian beliefs as the love of God, the resurrection, and the incarnation. Each sermon speaks to the heart in conviction, comfort, and encouragement. \$2.95

By the same author:

MAN TO MAN by Arthur C. Archibald \$1.75

See these Broadman Books at your favorite bookseller

## LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

SIRS:

In this 450th year commemorating the birth of John Calvin one finds many articles appearing in religious magazines throughout the world.

To the writer of these lines much of the present writing by so-called Calvinists on Calvinism, etc., is very one-sided and presents a false conception of John Calvin and the things he stood for.

While reading Rev. C. P. Dame's letter to the *Journal* of July-August the thought occurred to me, Does Rev. Dame read Calvin not only as a man of ecumenical spirit, which I certainly agree he was, but also as a man of profound principles and the truth? John Calvin stood for the truth at all costs and he was no compromiser. Calvin's struggle with the Nicodemites is an example of his adhering to principles and the truth. Even to his dying day Calvin defended his principles and was a man of unwavering devotion to God.

I also read the article "Calvin on Secession" by Rev. L. Verduin, and I acquiesce in what he has written. To encourage the spirit of secession just to be different or to create something new for the thrill it may give someone must be condemned! However, let us not be misled by the mistaken notion that all secession is fostered by the devil. Does Rev. Dame know to what extent many of the oldest denominations in this country, who have had their birth from John Calvin, look not only askance at some of Calvin's basic teachings, but flatly repudiate them? The kind of Calvinism rampant in the world today betrays the very things John Calvin stood for.

Neither can I embrace wholeheartedly Rev. Dame's statement that all the secessions which have resulted in the various communions going by the name Reformed were so because of *marginal matters*. Undoubtedly some of this enters into the picture, but it is more correct to say they were over matters pertaining to doctrines. Let us remember that the greatest secession was the Reformation, in which John Calvin was a leader. The world doesn't need another Calvin, but it is in need of his teachings!

The kind of ecumenicity advocated by such organizations as the World Council of Churches and all organizations akin to it, I am certain John Calvin would condemn with no uncertain words. Ecumenicity has a more

profound meaning than the uniting church bodies under one large church. Oneness in Christ does not literally mean the amalgamation of all churches. Conformity at the expense of truth, *enslavement* and peace at any price is false peace!

I do, however, agree with Rev. Dame's statement, "It is not enough to have the truth — truth should be practiced." There is much gravity in the words, which, I am certain, Rev. Dame himself realizes. If many of our churches had lived by these words in the first place, I dare to assume that not a few denominations would not be in existence today. Failure to live by the truth has resulted in secessions.

Sincerely yours,

Rochester, N. Y. QUINTON J. EVERETT

SIRS:

I have read with interest the article "If It Be Thy Will" written by the Rev. Henry M. De Rooy and published in the June 1959 issue of the *Journal*. I think this subject to be worthy of further consideration. Rev. De Rooy has touched upon a real sore spot in our prayer life. He is to be commended for his efforts to expose this malady and is suggesting a way of remedy.

I am not convinced, however, that his solution is a satisfactory one. Permit me to illustrate by way of comment. First of all he makes a theological distinction between the Will of God's precept and the Will of God's decree. Such a distinction is a valid one as long as we remember that it is a *theological* distinction and nothing more. Actually God's Will is *one* and not *two* as Professor Berkhof shows in his dogmatics. We must remember this because such an understanding will curb our natural urge to categorize. Rev. De Rooy's exposition of the two meanings is clear but when he begins to apply them to experience (especially prayer) I find him (in my estimation) guilty of invalid categorizing.

To illustrate, he speaks of the phrase "if it be Thy will" "as an offense to our prayer life." That its incorrect use often makes it so, I readily assent to; but that it is so in and by itself I fail to see. His reason for saying that it is an offense to our prayer life is that he assumes that those who



ay these words are thinking in their  
inds of God's Will of decree. Per-  
ps many do, but not necessarily so.  
hen they do they are in error, to be  
re, but these words need not neces-  
rily be prayed in that spirit.

The example he uses of Jesus' prayer  
the Garden of Gethsemane proves,  
think, this very point as he himself  
clearly shows. He says that as a  
ue human being "He faced the tempta-  
on to push away the bitter cup which  
e had been commanded to drink. And  
He prays for strength." Fur-  
er Rev. De Rooy says, "He prays,  
hy will be done by me." Exactly!  
e prays for strength. The same idea  
conveyed to us in the sixth petition  
the Lord's Prayer (cf. Lord's Day  
2 of the Heidelberg Catechism).

What prevents you or me when  
standing at the death bed of our dear-  
est friend to pray, "Father if it be  
ossible, let this cup pass from me.  
Nevertheless not my will but thine be  
one." To paraphrase this prayer we  
ay put it thus: "Father, the death of  
his loved one is too much for me. It  
ill be an occasion for stumbling be-  
ause of my weakness. Therefore spare  
me this experience. Nevertheless, if  
hou dost desire so to tempt [I take  
mpting here in the sense if testing  
we find it in Hebrews 4:15] my weak-  
ness, then give me the strength to bear  
it." To be sure, we pray it in a  
ifferent sense than Christ did, because  
e was sinless, but the object of this  
rayer is the same: Divine strength  
nd comfort.

I have the impression, too, that the  
aragraph which Rev. De Rooy wrote  
n the examples of how Jesus taught us  
o pray are a bit simplistic and have  
ot been expounded in the light of the  
hole of Scripture. The pivotal words  
here are "in faith" and "in my Name."  
These terms must be clearly under-  
stood in order to harmonize these  
eachings of Jesus *in person* with the  
eachings of Jesus *through His Apostles*,  
s for example in Romans 8:27 and  
I Corinthians 12:7-10.

Finally, in citing men of Scripture  
s great men of prayer Rev. De Rooy  
ays more than once that these men  
rayed *in spite of* the decree. Here  
pecially, I feel, he is a bit overcome  
y an eagerness to categorize. It is  
ue that with some of these men (Abra-  
am and David) the decree and the  
recept *show* their harmony. However,  
hat it is valid to say that the decree  
as revealed to them is highly question-

able, in fact very dubious. To their  
understanding this declaration of Jeho-  
vah was no more a revelation of the  
decree than was Jehovah's declaration  
to Hezekiah or to Nineveh or any one of  
His many declarations to Israel when  
we read later that "it repented him of  
the evil that he had determined against  
them." Man *always* and *only* deals  
with God's Will from the preceptive  
side, though admittedly man is com-  
forted by the knowledge of a ruling  
decree (Rom. 8:28).

Despite these points of negative  
criticism there is much in Rev. De  
Rooy's article which can be appreciated.  
The very fact that he dealt with this

theme as he did is commendable. I  
firmly believe that what he said on the  
subject needed saying, though I choose  
to say it differently.

Sincerely yours,  
WILBUR L. DE JONG

#### CORRECTION

The letter which appeared in last  
month's *Journal* on the subject of Cal-  
vin and the Unity of the Church was  
written by the Reverend C. P. Dame,  
Minister of the First Reformed Church,  
Allegan, Michigan. The Reverend Mr.  
Dame's name was erroneously given as  
Damme.

## THE RIDDLE OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

### Jaroslav Pelikan

Winner of the new Abingdon  
Award, whose purpose is to ac-  
complish the greatest good for  
the Christian faith and Christian  
living among all people.

In this honest analysis  
and appreciation of the  
Roman Catholic Church,  
Dr. Pelikan surveys how  
modern Roman Catholi-  
cism evolved, discusses its  
central practices and teach-  
ings, and explores some  
areas of common interest  
in which we may be able  
to realize fully the church  
of Jesus Christ on earth.

If you truly desire a  
deeper understanding of  
Roman Catholicism and its  
relationship to non-Roman  
Christianity, you will want  
to add this important book  
to your library. \$4

JAROSLAV PELIKAN, a  
young Lutheran minister,  
is professor of historical  
theology, the Federated  
Theological Faculty, the  
University of Chicago.

Particularly well known  
for his co-editorship of the  
widely-acclaimed *Luther's  
Works*, he is also co-author  
of the script for the movie  
"Martin Luther," and is  
Departmental Editor for  
Religion of *Encyclopaedia  
Britannica*.

Dr. Pelikan received  
\$12,500 for this prize-win-  
ning manuscript.

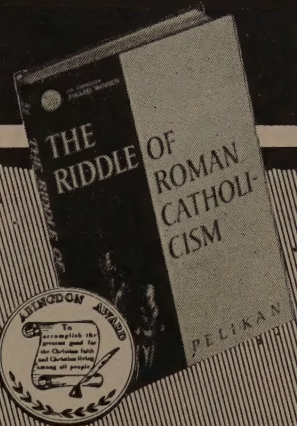
#### Previous Abingdon Award Winners

THE KINGDOM OF GOD by John Bright Cloth, \$3.75; Apex paperbound, \$1.25  
PRAYER AND THE COMMON LIFE by Georgia Harkness \$3  
HERE I STAND by Roland Bainton Cloth, \$4.75; Apex paperbound, \$1.75

Order from your bookstore

**ABINGDON PRESS**

Publisher of THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE





# THE BIBLE *that will Surprise You!*

Reveals Spiritual Meaning of Verses  
Gives Desired Information More Quickly



55 FEATURES...

7 GREAT DEPARTMENTS MAKE—

## THE NEW CHAIN-REFERENCE BIBLE

Truly a Bible PLUS a Biblical Library  
in ONE Volume

EDITED BY REV. F. C. THOMPSON, D.D., PH. D.

### READ WHAT OTHERS SAY:

Rev. L. Berkhof, B.D., Pres. Emeritus, Calvin Seminary: "It has been my privilege to use the New Chain Reference Bible and I have found it to be an invaluable aid in the study of the Scriptures. It is a non-partisan presentation of the truth that is found in the various 'Helps', so that these can safely be used by Christians of all denominations." Rev. Henry Schultze, A.M., B.D., Professor Extraordinary, Calvin Seminary: "Thompson's New Chain Reference Bible is a Biblical library in itself. It deserves unstinted recommendation. Once learn to use this Bible and you'll find it well nigh indispensable for further Bible study." Rev. J. J. Hiemenga, A.M., B.D., Emeritus, Lafayette, Ind.: "This New Chain Reference Bible is so full of useful information and offers such a splendid system to get the most information on almost any Bible subject in a comprehensive way, I do not hesitate to recommend it wholeheartedly to anyone who is interested in Bible knowledge." Rev.

Geo. Goris, Th.D., Pastor, Hope Christian Reformed Church, Grandville, Mich.: "For twenty-five years I have been using the Thompson Chain Reference Bible in my work and during this time, I have compared it with many other Bibles, but believe that it is the very best on the market. Without the least bit of hesitation and with genuine delight, I recommend this Bible to Sunday School teachers, ministers and all lovers of the Word of God." Rev. Wm. Hendrickson, Th.D., Pastor, First Christian Reformed Church, Byron Center, Mich.: "I take great pleasure in recommending the New Chain Reference Bible. It is surely the very best reference Bible on the market today. There are other works which have been highly recommended in our circles, some of which I have used. Not any of them, however, compares even remotely with the work which I am now recommending. This is one book in which one does not become disappointed."

Most  
Helpful  
Bible  
Published

## Rapidly Replacing Other Bibles—Has So Many More New Helps!

1. Unique chart showing Origin and Growth of the English Bible.
  2. The Outline Studies of Bible Periods, comparing Biblical History with Contemporary Secular History.
  3. The Analysis of the Bible as a Whole.
  4. The Analysis of each of the 66 Books of the Bible.
  5. The Analysis of every Chapter of the New Testament.
  6. The Analysis of the Verses of the entire Bible.
  7. The Numerical and Chain Reference Systems.
  8. Special Analysis of the Important Bible Characters.
  9. Contrast between the Old and New Testaments.
  10. The Topical Treasury. New Topics for Prayer Meetings, Men's Meetings, Women's Meetings, Missionary Meetings, Young People's Meetings, etc.
  11. Special Bible Readings for private devotions and public services. New and different subjects.
  12. Bible Harmonies of the Lives of Moses and Paul.
  13. Special Portraits of Jesus.
  14. Chart of the Messianic Stars.
  15. Chart showing cause of the Babylonian Captivity.
  16. Chart of the Temple of Truth, illustrating the Sermon on the Mount.
  17. Chart of Jesus' Hours on the Cross.
  18. The Christian Workers' Outfit. Of special value to soul winners.
  19. All Prominent Bible Characters Classified, listing the Patriarchs, Leaders in Early Hebrew History, Courageous Reformers, etc., with meaning of their names given.
  20. Golden Chapters of the Bible.
  21. A Complete General Index of over seven thousand topics, names and places.
  22. Special Memory Verses selected from each Book of the Bible.
  23. Chart Showing Seven Editions of Divine Law.
  24. Graph of the Prodigal Son.
  25. Bible Mnemonics, or how to memorize.
  26. The Principles and Best Methods of Bible Study.
  27. Pictorial Illustration of the River of Inspiration.
  28. Bible Markings, Explaining best methods of marking one's Bible.
  29. Concordance.
  30. Atlas of 12 colored maps with index for quickly locating places.
- Other Features in Text Cyclopedia
31. Topical Study of the Bible. Correlated Scriptures printed out in full under 2467 topics and sub-topics. Three times as many as in any other Bible.
  32. Contrast Study of Great Truths of the Bible. Enables

- you to study the Constructive and Destructive Forces of Life, with the Bible verses printed out in full under such subjects as Faith—Unbelief, Love—Hatred, Courage—Fear, etc.
33. Life Studies, such as Business Life, Home Life, Devotional Life, The Surrendered Life, etc.
  34. Bible Stories for Children. A list of 56 stories to be read from the Bible itself.
  35. Miracles of both the Old and New Testaments listed in Chronological Order.
  36. Parables of the Old Testament. Parables of the New Testament, listing those given in One Gospel Only, those given in Two, and those given in Three.
  37. Titles and Names of Christ; of the Holy Spirit; of God the Father; and of Satan.
  38. General Bible Prophecies.
  39. A List of the Prophets of the Bible.
  40. List of Judges of Israel and Judah given in Chronological Order.
  41. List of the Notable Women of the Bible.
  42. Mountains and Hills referred to in Bible, listing the Scenes of Great Events.
  43. Dictionary Material.
  44. Tables of Time, Money, Weights and Measures.

### Eleven New Features Added in the Third Improved Edition

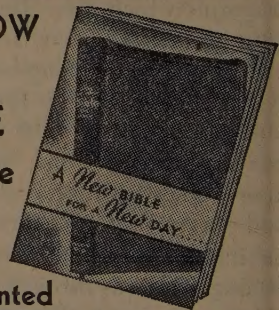
45. The Historical Bridge, covering interval between the Old and New Testaments.
46. Chart showing the History of the Apostles.
47. Harmony of the Gospels, citing references in different Gospels where events are given.
48. Calendar of the Christian Era.
49. The Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus, illustrated with well-known paintings.
50. Chart of the Seven Churches of Asia, described by John.
51. An Outline History of the Evangelistic and Missionary Work of the Early Church.
52. The prophecies concerning Jesus and their fulfillment, arranged Chronologically, with principal verses printed out in full.
53. Map Showing Approximate Distances from Jerusalem to Various Historical Points.
54. Chart Showing the Interior Arrangement of the Temple at Jerusalem.
55. Thirteen Special Illustrated Maps Showing the Journeys of Jesus, Peter, Paul, and the Journeys of the Children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. These are separate maps, mind you—not several crowded together on one page.

The Revised Version is given in the wide margin opposite the verses, wherever an important difference in meaning occurs.

### Be Fair to Yourself!

See this special Bible with its unequalled practical helps before you buy any Bible—or you may regret it as others have. Ask your pastor about it. No other Bible is so highly praised by so many renowned Bible Students.

SEND NOW  
for this  
big FREE  
descriptive  
BOOK



### Agents Wanted

B. B. KIRKBRIDE BIBLE CO., INC.,  
Dept. R-279 K. of P. Bldg.  
Indianapolis, Indiana.

☐ Without cost or obligation to me, send a copy of the big illustrated book, "A New Bible for a New Day," and full particulars concerning the Third Improved Edition of your New Chain Reference Bible.

☐ Send your special terms to Representatives.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

B. B. *Kirkbride* BIBLE CO., INC.

R-279 K. OF P. BLDG.

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA